

**CAB Activities in County FY23
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023**

ADVOCACY

Work Supports

- CAB Vice Chair Zelda Wafer-Jones testified on behalf of the CAB in support of two Council Bills. Council Bill 10 – 22 provides paid parental leave for County employees. Council Bill 11 – 22 requires lactation rooms in most County buildings.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of HB988 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications

EITC/CTC/VITA

- CAB joined a Prosperity Now letter urging Congress to reinstate the expanded Child Tax Credit, which cut child poverty by 46% between 2020 and 2021.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB552/HB547 - Family Prosperity Act of 2023
- In May, CAB developed a sign-on letter to the County Council requesting full funding for the Working Families Income Supplement in the FY24 budget so that it would remain a 100% match of the state's EITC. Fourteen organizations signed onto the letter.
- CAB signed onto a letter supporting the creation of IRS Free Direct File software that would be available to all taxpayers.

Food Security

- CAB submitted testimony to the County Council in support of a Special Appropriation that adds funding for food distribution by increasing funds for Manna Food Center and the Capital Area Food Bank.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB562 - Maryland Small Food Banks Grant Program – Establishment

Community Action Board and Agency Needs

- CAB Chair Dr. Jeffery Johnson shared the CAB's priorities at a County Council HHS Committee meeting for Boards, Committees, and Commissions. The Board's priorities focused on staffing needs at TESS, expanding navigation, staff support for VITA, and a contractor for the CAI.
- CAB submitted testimony for the annual Joint Delegation Hearing and Chair, Dr. Jeffery Johnson, testified at the hearing. The testimony focused on state-level priorities, including establishing a Community Action Fund, 2Gen/Whole Family funding, making expansions of the state EITC permanent, and addressing concerns regarding the Blueprint Plan. The testimony also noted the new SSS, which would be released in the coming months.
- Dr. Johnson testified at the County Council budget hearing in support of CAB priorities, focusing on staffing needs for the agency.

Early Childhood Education

- CAB Chair Dr. Jeffery Johnson testified at the Board of Education's Budget Hearing. The testimony focused on early care and education needs in the County, including the need for more nurses and a mixed delivery model that includes private and public ECE providers.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB893/HB1219 - Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023

Housing

- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB420/HB562 - Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Housing Allowance
- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB756/HB1050 - Access to Counsel in Evictions – Funding and on March 7th, Dr. Johnson testified for the CAB in support of HB1050, which would provide funding for a program that offers legal counsel to individuals facing eviction.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of Fire Protection and Prevention – Sprinkler Systems and Smoke Alarms – Requirements (Melanie Diaz Sprinklers Save Lives Act)
- CAB submitted testimony to the County Council in support of Council Bill 16-23 – The HOME Act, which would limit annual rent increases to 3%.

Access to Services

- CAB submitted testimony in support of HB111/SB26 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs - Eligibility & Enrollment
- CAB submitted testimony in support of SB160 - Human Services - TCA - Calculation of Benefits
- CAB submitted testimony in support of HB323 - Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment

Other:

- CAB submitted a letter of support for MCAP's application for a federal grant to increase diaper distribution at CAAs.
- CAB submitted testimony in support of HB 0108 - Human Services - Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth – Establishment (support with recommended amendment)
- CAB submitted testimony in support of HB 0087/SB52 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs - Waiver - Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products

Direct Advocacy with Elected Officials:

- On February 7th, Dr. Johnson joined Sharon and Leah to participate in the MCAP Advocacy Day. Delegation meetings included Delegates Bernice Mireku-North, Julie Palakovich-Carr, David Moon, Pam Queen, Gabriel Acevero, and Lorig Charkoudian, along with staff for Delegates Sara Love and Ariana Kelly. These sessions focused on

MCAP priorities, including the establishment of a Community Action Anti-Poverty Fund and 2Gen funding for Community Action Agencies.

- In March and April, members of the Board met individually with all 11 members of the County Council to discuss the board's budget priorities.

BOARD GOVERNANCE, TRAINING, AND COLLABORATION:

- August 24, 2022 – The EC voted to approve the proposed FY23 CSBG budget.
- August 24, 2022 – The EC voted to approve an adjustment to the CARES budget, reallocating funds to hire a consultant to work with VITA on strategic planning and a company to assist VITA with its EITC outreach.
- August 24 and 25, 2022 – The EC held its annual retreat to review achievements from the previous year and select priorities for FY23.
- August 31 – September 2, 2022 – Dr. Johnson and Zelda Wafer-Jones participated in the National Community Action Partnership Annual Convention in New York.
- October 25, 2022 – The CAB voted to approve the combined annual report for FY20 and FY21.
- November 29, 2022 – Board leadership joined staff to lead a new board member orientation session for Evelyn Okutu, a Head Start representative serving in the low-income sector of the board.
- January 10, 2023 – The CAB EC was joined by Monica Rivera-Goldberg, Navigation Program Manager; Joy Hatchette, Associate Commissioner, MD Insurance Administration; and Valerie Whitby, Investigator, Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs. Guests discussed the need for renters insurance for lower-income residents and what can be done to address this issue.
- January 10, 2023 – The CAB EC voted to approve the Community Needs Assessment.
- January 24, 2023 – The CAB voted to approve the CSBG Organizational Standards Report.
- January 24, 2023 – The CAB voted to approve the agency's Community Needs Assessment.
- January 24, 2023 – The CAB established the Affordable Housing Ad Hoc Committee to review housing policies and make recommendations.
- January 29, 2023 – CAB members Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Myriam Paul, and Dr. Jeffery Johnson all participated in the Women's Legislative Briefing.
- February 22, 2023 – CAB member Evelyn Okutu presented on the CAB's advocacy work, especially with regard to ECE issues, at the Early Childhood Education Workforce Coalition meeting.
- February 27, 2023 – CAB members Dr. Johnson and Claudia Simmons presented to the board of Wonders Early Learning and Extended Day about the CAB's advocacy work.
- February 28, 2023 – The CAB approved the agency's request for the Head Start low-cost extension for American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding.
- March 14, 2023 – The EC approved the CSBG Annual Report on behalf of the full board.
- March 28, 2023 - Prior to the start of the full board meeting, the board members had a special discussion with Ludeen McCartney-Green, a Legislative Attorney with the County

Council, regarding the two rent stabilization bills before the County Council. Ms. McCartney-Green shared information about both bills and answered board members' questions.

- March 28, 2023 – CAB established a Recruitment Committee that would later review applications to the CAB, interview applicants, and select the applicants to recommend for appointment by the CE.
- March 28, 2023 – CAB established a Nominating Committee which was tasked with developing the CAB Executive Committee slate for FY24.
- March 28, 2023 – CAB approved the Head Start grant application for FY24 and Head Start transportation waiver request.
- April 25, 2023 – Prior to the CAB meeting, Kirsten Andersen with the Linkages to Learning Program, shared a special presentation for the board about this program and the new Bridge to Wellness program.
- April 25, 2023 – Verna Washington and Charlene Muhammad led a presentation for the CAB about the Head Start School Readiness data.
- April 25, 2023 – The CAB Nominating Committee presented the EC slate for FY24. Following the meeting, board members submitted their ballots virtually via a Survey Monkey. The CAB elected the new EC members:
 - Chair: Dr. Jeffery Johnson
 - Vice Chair: Claudia Simmons
 - Secretary: Myriam Paul
 - At-Large EC Members: Erika Conner, Denise Frederick, Evelyn Okutu, and Mike Subin
- April 25, 2023 – CAB established a Strategic Planning Committee that would meet with Sue Myers, a consultant the agency is working with, to provide board feedback on the agency's work and next steps.
- May 3 – 5, 2023 – Dr. Johnson, Claudia Simmons, Lisa Conlon, and Evelyn Okutu participated in the MCAP Conference. Evelyn was a presenter at a workshop about advocacy training programs where she spoke about the CAI. She was also a keynote speaker at the Awards Breakfast.
- May 10, 2023 – Zelda Wafer-Jones and Denise Frederick attended a meet and greet for BCC leaders with Acting DHHS Director Dr. James Bridgers.
- June 2023 – Myriam Paul volunteered to serve on the Women's Legislative Briefing Planning Committee on behalf of Community Action.
- June 12, 2023 – The CAB's Strategic Planning Committee participated in a special session with consultants Sue Myers and Delquanda Turner Smith. Committee members learned about the strategic planning process and had the opportunity to share their feedback on the work that had been completed so far.
- June 20, 2023 – Zelda Wafer-Jones joined Sharon for a presentation about the Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Healthcare Initiative Foundation's Navigation Summit.
- June 27, 2023 – CAB members participated in a discussion about the agency's strategic planning process, led by Sue Myers and Delquanda Turner Smith. Board members

received an overview of the process and were able to share their thoughts on what was missing.

- June 27, 2023 – The outgoing board leaders were thanked at the monthly meeting and the FY24 EC members were installed.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY INSTITUTE:

- July 6, 2022 – A CAI alumni workshop focused on mental health resources and featured speakers from the DHHS Crisis Center, EveryMind, and Identity.
- August 2022 – CAB members interviewed applicants for the CAI Ambassadors Program and selected seven Ambassadors for the year.
- July/August 2022 – Outreach for the CAI was extremely successful, and the board received over 70 applications for the FY23 CAI program, a record number.
- September 2022 – Board members and CAI Ambassadors interviewed 45 applicants and selected the participants for the FY23 program. After a couple participants had to drop out early on and participants from the priority list were added, there were 26 participants in the cohort. There are 10 participants who are learning English and utilizing the Spanish interpretation for workshops.
- September 1, 2022 – CAB Vice Chair Zelda Wafer-Jones and CAI graduate June Henderson participated in a panel discussion at National Community Action Partnership Convention workshop about leadership programs at CAAs. Zelda explained how the CAI was created and what the program entails. June spoke about her life experience and her experience in the CAI.
- October 15, 2022 – The CAI orientation was held at Georgian Forest Park. Led by Dr. Johnson, the session included an overview of the program and an opportunity for the participants to select the topics for the second workshop.
- October 19, 2022 – Sharon and CAI graduate Evelyn Okutu spoke to a University of Maryland History class that was studying Great Society programs of the 1960s. Sharon spoke about the agency's work and Evelyn spoke about the CAI and her experience with the program.
- November 12, 2022 – The first CAI workshop, Advocacy 101, was facilitated by CAB member Lisette Orellana Engel. A panel discussion with elected officials included state Delegate Pam Queen, County Council President Gabe Albornoz, and County Councilmember-Elect Laurie-Anne Sayles. Nicole Rodriguez-Hernandez from the County Council led a presentation about the County's legislative and budget processes. CAI graduates Pamela Taylor and Angela Hughes-Byrd spoke about their experiences in the program and what they have done since graduation.
- December 3, 2022 – The second CAI workshop, Exploring the Issues, was facilitated by Erika Conner. The first portion of the workshop included presentation by Jennifer Grinnell, EveryMind (mental health); Anthony Featherstone (workforce development); Sarah Selim Milad, Just Neighbors (immigration issues); and Beth Driggers, DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (affordable housing and preventing homelessness). Melissa Rock from MD Family Network led a presentation about

successful advocacy campaigns. Six CAI Ambassadors led small group discussions to check in with participants.

- January 7, 2023 - The third CAI workshop, *Storytelling and Research*, was facilitated by Mary Bennett, with Hillery Tumba from the Primary Care Coalition and Lisa Peters from RESULTS joining as guest speakers. The workshop featured videos and testimony highlighting storytelling, including three from CAI graduates. CAI Ambassadors led small group discussions.
- January 19, 2023 - Action in Montgomery led a CAI alumni workshop that focused on AIM's approach to advocacy. This includes one-on-one discussions to build trust and team building.
- February 4, 2023 – The fourth CAI workshop, *The Nuts and Bolts of Advocacy*, was facilitated by Pam Luckett. The session focused on communicating with elected officials via email and developing original testimony. Dr. Johnson led an excellent presentation about public speaking. Three CAI graduates, Albert Reed, Odessa Davis, and Vanessa Pierre, participated in a very well-received panel discussion about their advocacy efforts since completing the CAI. CAI Ambassadors led small group discussions to answer questions about the homework assignment.
- February 16, 2023 - Sarah Selim Milad, an attorney at Just Neighbors who spoke at the second CAI workshop, led a well-attended CAI alumni session about immigration legal issues.
- March 4, 2023 – The first CAI testimony practice session was held in person at the County Council Office Building. Timothy Robinson facilitated the session and CAB members/former members/staff, Mary Bennett, Zeldia Wafer-Jones, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Elaine Carballo, Agnes Leshner, and Sharon, all served on the mock County Council. County Councilmember Laurie-Anne Sayles joined as a special guest.
- March 25, 2023 – The second CAI testimony practice session, led by Myriam Paul, was held on Zoom. Participants had the opportunity share their testimony and receive feedback. The session also included a panel discussion with CAI graduates Angela Harvey, Joseph Hooks, Lynnette Hamrick, Mayra Alvarado, and Ramata Diop.
- April 2023 – All 21 CAI participants submitted their original testimony to County Council and nine participants also testified at budget hearings.
- April 26, 2023 – Participants provided feedback on the entire program at a wrap-up session led by Valerie Chatfield-Smith. Participants also had the opportunity to share feedback in an online survey.
- May 23, 2023 – 21 participants graduated from the FY23 program at a special ceremony held at Bohrer Park. Dr. Johnson and Zeldia Wafer-Jones led the ceremony, with Mary Bennett, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, and Myriam Paul leading the presentation of the graduates. County Executive Marc Elrich joined the ceremony and shared a Joint County Council and County Executive Proclamation. Councilmembers Katz, Balcombe, and Sayles; Betty Lam; and Sharon Strauss also shared remarks. Graduates had the opportunity to read their personal statements during the ceremony.
- June 8, 2023 – The CAB hosted a well-attended CAI alumni workshop focused on services for young children and related advocacy issues. Facilitated by Zeldia Wafer-

Jones, the session included a panel discussion featuring Charlene Muhammad, Head Start Manager at Community Action; Jennifer Ferreira, Family Resource Specialist for DHHS Child Care Support Services; Jill Lyons, Family Support Network Manager with the Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program; and Elka Forbes and Jennifer Penrose from the Commission on Child Care. Participants learned about these important programs, along with current advocacy issues focused on the needs of young children.

OTHER:

- August 2, 2022 – Several board members participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new TESS location on Flower Ave. Dr. Johnson spoke on behalf of the CAB.
- December 8, 2022 – Dr. Johnson joined Sharon, DHHS colleagues, and Department of Environmental Protection for the Minority Legislative Breakfast.
- January 20, 2023 – Dr. Johnson spoke at an EITC Awareness/VITA Kick-Off event, along with Comptroller Brooke Lierman, County Councilmember Laurie-Anne Sayles, a VITA volunteer, and a VITA client.
- March 14, 2023 - Lisette Orellana Engel joined VITA Program Specialist Eddie Mendes as the featured guests for Montgomery al Día, discussing VITA tax services and the impact of tax credits.